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ABSTRACT

The author outlines the importance of educational assessment in determining the quality of a school's educational system. A model is presented showing the three dimensions of quality educational programs and their interrelatedness. The Indicators of Quality Schools instrument, the purpose of which is to identify areas for improvement across three dimensions -- student outcomes; school leadership, instructional and institutional characteristics; and accountability/accreditation/planning processes, is described. Each of 12 categories consists of a series of items based on educational research on effective school practices with a number of subitems listed below each item. Assessing a school through the use of this instrument points out school strengths while pinpointing needed improvement. After the assessment process is completed, it is important to follow through with the needed improvements. Appendix A contains a complete listing of the items; Appendix B includes a sample page from the instrument. (MD)

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INDICATORS OF QUALITY SCHOOLS

I. OVERVIEW

COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
School Improvement and Leadership Services Unit

May, 1982

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INDICATORS OF QUALITY SCHOOLS

I. Overview

II. Users' Guide

III. Review of the Literature on Effective Schools

Instrument to Assess the Educational Quality of Your School

I. OVERVIEW

CONDUCTING AN ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL QUALITY IN YOUR SCHOOL

A. Why An Assessment of Quality?

The issue of quality is not new to American education. In years past, school communities measured the quality of their schools in terms of the number and character of resources, such as dollars spent per pupil and numbers of books in the instructional media center, which might be marshalled to meet the needs of burgeoning school populations. Today, however, the issues of quality focuses not only on resources but also on the need to determine what and how well students are learning.

The purpose of this document is to suggest one way of establishing a quality assessment process -- one way to start. School principals and instructional staffs undoubtedly are already doing much to assure a quality educational program within their buildings. It is important, however, that school and community together commit themselves to the ongoing task of assessing educational programs, following up with improvement activities, and making visible the results. A school should not attempt to do everything at once; rather it is important to establish priorities, develop a plan of action and move ahead in a systematic fashion.

A substantial amount of education research indicates that student achievement and satisfaction in learning is greater in those schools which exhibit certain characteristics within the school setting. Therefore, the quality of the learning environment may be measured to a considerable extent by the degree to which these characteristics are evident in the day-to-day operation of the school.

Much of this research is limited in grades studied (more at elementary) and success criteria (mostly basic skills achievement). Also the research is generalized across student populations and what most often results in effective schools. Effective learning situations for any given individual, however, may be quite different from the general findings.

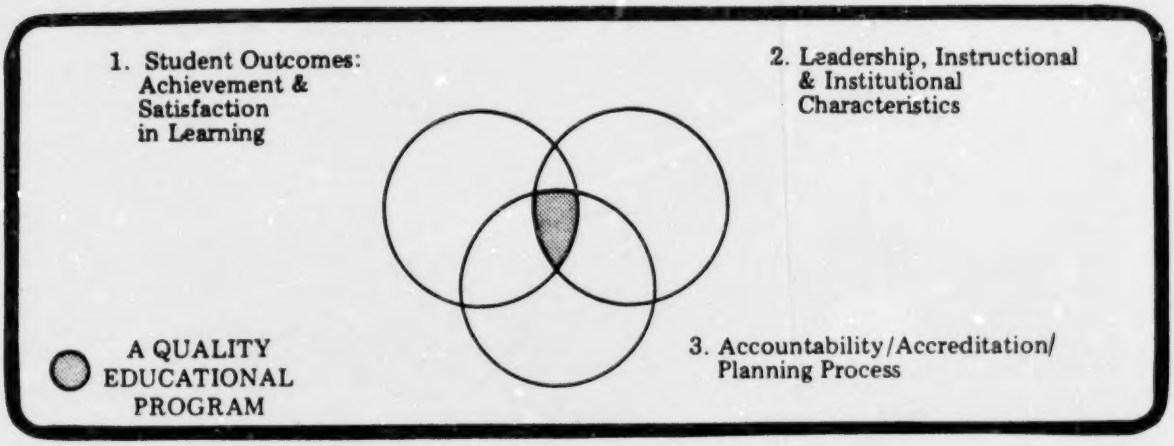
Recognizing the number and complexity of factors at work within the instructional setting, it would be presumptuous to single out any handful of descriptors as the determinants of quality within the teaching-learning environment. However, the characteristics described in the INDICATORS OF QUALITY SCHOOLS, representing as they do the results of recent research and acknowledged good practice, may provide a useful, initial contribution to your assessment efforts and are, therefore, deserving of careful consideration.

B. A Three Dimensional Perspective of Educational Quality

The INDICATORS OF QUALITY SCHOOLS instrument has been organized across three distinct, yet interrelated dimensions. These dimensions are:

I. Student Outcomes: Achievement and Satisfaction in Learning
II. School Leadership, Instructional and Institutional Characteristics
III. Accountability/Accreditation/Planning Process

Figure 1


1. Student Outcomes: Achievement & Satisfaction in Learning
2. Leadership, Instructional & Institutional Characteristics
3. Accountability/Accreditation/ Planning Process
A QUALITY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Central to this model is the belief that to achieve quality student achievement and satisfaction, each of the remaining dimensions must be strengthened. Therefore, to improve the quality of the first dimension one must improve the quality of the other two dimensions. Each of these dimensions plays a key role in the attainment of a quality educational program. Within each may be identified a number of elements important to an educational assessment. Although each of these dimensions is described separately, it is important to remember it is the interrelationship of these dimensions that produces quality education. There is a cumulative effect of quality practices such that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Student Outcomes: Achievement and Satisfaction in Learning

This dimension emphasizes the primary mission of the school - to facilitate positive achievement and satisfaction in learning. Basic to this mission is the need to identify what it is students are expected to learn and whether the curriculum delivers that learning. Expectations are stated by the district as learner or student goals. While these statements typically are written on a district-wide basis to assure continuity and congruence among schools within the district, they also are equally important at the individual building level. These goals usually include such areas as academic achievement, competency for life, personal growth in satisfaction and self-concept. Within this paper these broad range goals have been called simply "achievement and satisfaction in learning". The indicators in dimension one look both at the assessment process in the school and at congruence among the curricular objectives, the instruction and the assessment of outcomes.

Leadership, Instructional and Institutional Characteristics

This dimension emphasizes what takes place in schools in terms of the processes of instruction, administration, and leadership. Attention is focused on the teaching-learning environments and those characteristics that research indicates are positively related to student achievement and satisfaction. These characteristics should not be considered as an exhaustive listing.

Each of the previous dimensions is critically dependent upon the effective functioning of the accreditation/accountability/planning processes both at the building and district level. Major elements to be considered within these processes are:

- Effective involvement of parents and community in education;
- A communications network responsive to the concerns and interests of the school's several publics;
- Ongoing assessment of student needs;
- Priority-setting and action-planning to meet identified needs;
- Managing and evaluating the improvement effort.

C. A Description of the Instrument

The INDICATORS OF QUALITY SCHOOLS instrument is divided into twelve categories (Figure 2). Each category consists of a series of items based on educational research on effective school practices. A complete listing of items can be found in Appendix A of this Overview. Each of the items has listed below it a number of sub-items which help delineate the item under consideration. A sample page from the instrument showing this format may be seen in Appendix B.

As mentioned above, this is not intended as encompassing all known effective school characteristics. An assessment of a school, based on this listing, will however, point up significant school strengths and further pinpoint areas where efforts at improvement could lead to strengthening the quality of the educational program. Note that the focus of this instrument is not on the status of the quality of a school's program relative to some standard but on identifying areas for improvement within an individual school.

Figure 2

OUTLINE OF CATEGORIES

I. Student Outcomes

1. Curricular Congruence
2. Assessment

II. School Leadership & Instruction

3. Leadership of the Principal
4. High Expectations
5. School-wide Norms, Values, Practices and Policies
6. School Climate Factors
7. Monitoring and Feedback of Student Progress
8. Time on Task
9. Organization and Management of the Instructional Setting
10. Instructional Effectiveness

III. Accountability/Accreditation/Planning Process

11. Parent and Community Involvement
12. Accountability/Accreditation/ Planning Process

D. Following Through on the Assessment Process

In considering ways to make the assessment process more meaningful, it is important to establish school-community ownership both for the descriptors of educational quality and for the school improvement process itself. Assessment procedures should be regarded as part of an ongoing process rather than as an "infrequent" occurrence.

Effective schools do not simply "happen"; they are the result of thoughtful planning. Those involved in decisions that are reached must also take ownership for the products resulting from those decisions. Quality student outcomes along with quality leadership and instruction are significant products that come from the use of a well-defined accountability/accreditation/planning process.

The following activities may be useful in carrying out the improvement process once the assessment is completed and appropriate information collected and analyzed.

- IDENTIFY school level priorities for improving the quality of your educational program and select those which are most important. The remaining priorities will need to be dealt with at a future time.
- ORGANIZE and support staff task forces to develop an ACTION PLAN to achieve each priority. Allow staff members to determine whether they wish to work on a task force, and encourage them to select the priority (or priorities) they wish to work toward. Students and community persons should be involved on these task forces as appropriate.
- REPORT back to the school and community what the priorities are, the plan for improvement, and progress in carrying out the improvement activities.

APPENDIX A

LISTING OF ITEMS FROM INDICATORS OF QUALITY SCHOOLS

1. CURRICULAR CONGRUENCE

1. LEARNER OBJECTIVES EXIST WHICH ARE CLEAR, VALID, AND SEQUENCED.

2. THERE IS A MATCH BETWEEN THE WRITTEN CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT, i.e., THE TESTS REFLECT THE CURRICULUM.

3. THERE IS A MATCH BETWEEN INSTRUCTION AND THE WRITTEN CURRICULUM.

2. ASSESSMENT

4. THE SCHOOL (OR DISTRICT) HAS ESTABLISHED EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT PURPOSES AND PRIORITIES.

5. A VARIETY OF MEASURES OR INDICATORS ARE USED WHICH ARE APPROPRIATE FOR THE OBJECTIVES.

6. STUDENT OUTCOME RESULTS AND OTHER EVALUATIONS ARE REPORTED TO APPROPRIATE PUBLICS AND INDIVIDUALS, AND THE RESULTS USED TO MAKE DECISIONS FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT.

3. LEADERSHIP OF THE PRINCIPAL

7. THE PRINCIPAL MAINTAINS AN ONGOING, EFFECTIVE STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM, AWARE THAT THE STAFF REGULARLY NEEDS NEW SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE AND MAINTAIN EXCELLENCE IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM.

8. THE PRINCIPAL SUPPORTS AND ENCOURAGES THE STAFF, IS SEEN AS AN AGENT OF CHANGE, i.e., IMPROVEMENT, AND AS A STRONG EDUCATIONAL LEADER.

9. THE PRINCIPAL IS SEEN AS A PERSON WHO INVOLVES THE STAFF AND STUDENTS IN REACHING DECISIONS.

10. THE PRINCIPAL KNOWS WHAT THE COMMUNITY EXPECTS OF THE SCHOOL, AND ACTIVELY SEEKS PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR STUDENTS' EDUCATION.

11. THE PRINCIPAL SETS HIGH BUT REALISTIC STANDARDS FOR PERFORMANCE AND LETS THE STAFF, STUDENTS AND PARENTS KNOW WHAT THESE STANDARDS ARE.

4. HIGH EXPECTATIONS

12. THIS SCHOOL HAS HIGH EXPECTATIONS OF ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL STUDENTS.

13. TEACHERS GIVE REWARDS, PRAISE AND RECOGNITION TO STUDENTS FOR THEIR PERFORMANCE.

5. SCHOOL-WIDE NORMS, VALUES, PRACTICES AND POLICIES

14. VALUES AND NORMS ARE CONSISTENT THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL AND ARE ACCEPTED BY STAFF AND STUDENTS.

15. SCHOOL POLICIES WHICH AFFECT STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GAINS ARE CLEAR AND HAVE STUDENT AND STAFF SUPPORT.

6. SCHOOL CLIMATE FACTORS

16. RESPECT.

17. TRUST.

18. HIGH MORALE.

19. COHESIVENESS.

20. CARING.

21. CONDITIONS IN THIS SCHOOL SUPPORT A PLEASANT AND COMFORTABLE CLIMATE FOR STUDENTS.

22. SPECIFIC SYMPTOMS OR INDICATORS OF POSITIVE CLIMATE ARE GENERALLY HIGH.

7. MONITORING AND FEEDBACK OF STUDENT PROGRESS

23. THE SCHOOL HAS AN EVALUATION PROGRAM THAT MONITORS AND REPORTS STUDENT PROGRESS.

24. EACH STUDENT IS MONITORED FREQUENTLY AND RECEIVES INFORMATION REGARDING HIS/HER PERFORMANCE.

25. TEACHERS, PRINCIPALS AND PARENTS ARE KEPT AWARE OF PUPIL PROGRESS RELATIVE TO OBJECTIVES.

8. TIME ON TASK

26. THE AMOUNTS OF TIME ALL STUDENTS SPEND ENGAGED OR ON TASK IS HIGH (A MINIMUM OF 70% OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL PERIOD).

27. ADMINISTRATORS, TEACHERS, AND SUPPORT STAFF ENFORCE A POLICY THAT NO ONE DISTURBS A TEACHER DURING INSTRUCTION.

9. ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL SETTING

28. TEACHERS BEGIN THE SCHOOL YEAR EFFECTIVELY BY SETTING THE STAGE FOR LEARNING.

29. THE ORGANIZATION OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL SETTING IS SUCH THAT ALL STUDENTS HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SUCCESS.

30. TEACHERS PREPARE STUDENTS FOR INDEPENDENT INQUIRY AND STUDY.

31. THERE IS WIDESPREAD SUPPORT FROM THE SCHOOL STAFF, PARENTS AND STUDENTS REGARDING THE SCHOOL'S NORMS FOR STUDENT BEHAVIOR.

32. TEACHERS HAVE AND USE A VARIETY OF DISCIPLINE STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING DISRUPTIVE STUDENTS.

10. INSTRUCTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

33. TEACHERS CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT THAT MODELS HIGH LEARNING EXPECTATIONS.

INSTRUCTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS cont.

34. TEACHERS CHOOSE INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES THAT PROVIDE GREATER AMOUNTS OF TIME FOR STUDENT-TEACHER INTERACTION.

35. TEACHERS USE APPROPRIATE DISCUSSION TECHNIQUES TO PROMOTE HIGH SUCCESS AND ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS FOR ALL STUDENTS.

11. PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

36. PARENTS OF OUR STUDENTS WORK WITH THEM AT HOME IN SUPPORT OF THE SCHOOL'S PROGRAM.

37. THERE IS A STRONG PROGRAM OF PARENT-SUPPORT AND PARTICIPATION IN THE SCHOOL.

38. THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE INCLUDING BUSINESS, OTHER INSTITUTIONS AND CITIZENS WITHOUT CHILDREN IN THE SCHOOL IS INVOLVED IN SUPPORTING THE SCHOOL.

12. ACCOUNTABILITY/ ACCREDITATION/ PLANNING PROCESS

39. THE SCHOOL AND DISTRICT HAVE ASSESSED THEIR NEEDS AND STRENGTHS AND IDENTIFIED PRIORITIES FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT.

40. PLANS HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED FOR EACH IMPROVEMENT PRIORITY.

41. IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS AND INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS ARE IMPLEMENTED, EVALUATED AND MODIFIED.

42. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS EXIST TO REPORT STUDENT OUTCOMES AND IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS TO THE STAFF AND PUBLIC.

Colorado Department of Education
School Improvement and Leadership
Services Unit
May, 1982

APPENDIX B
Example Page

INDICATORS OF QUALITY SCHOOLS

9. ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL SETTING

The managerial skills of teachers relate positively to student effectiveness. Such skills include teacher behaviors that lead to high level student involvement in learning activities, that minimize disruptive student behavior, and that make efficient use of academic learning time. While such skills are not sufficient for instructional effectiveness they are fundamental and necessary for student progress in the basic skills.

WHAT IS

The extent to which this practice/condition is present in your school.

0 = Is not present

1 = It is just beginning. It operates only on a very limited basis

2 = It is present and operating but only in certain programs or departments

3 = It is present and operating well on a school-wide basis

IMPACT POTENTIAL

The extent to which human and/or material resources invested in the implementation of this practice/condition is positively impacting or could positively impact the effectiveness of your school.

0 = No impact potential for school effectiveness

1 = Very limited impact potential

2 = Some impact potential

3 = Very positive impact potential for school effectiveness

	WHAT IS	IMPACT POTENTIAL
___1.	TEACHERS BEGIN THE YEAR EFFECTIVELY BY SETTING THE STAGE FOR LEARNING.	1.___
___ a.	Teachers are in charge of the instructional setting from the moment the first students arrive.	___
___ b.	Teachers systematically explain the rules, have them modeled, give standards for acceptable behavior, give students an opportunity to practice the desired behavior, and indicate the consequences of not following the rules.	___
___ c.	Teachers introduce the students to all of the major instructional arrangements to be used during the year; e.g., grouping arrangements, types of tests to be used, how the books are organized, homework procedures, etc.	___
___ d.	A system of student responsibility and accountability for work is established on the first day. This system is perceived by students as fair and clear.	___
___ e.	Teachers continuously monitor students and follow through with consequences for those who do not comply with rules and procedures.	___
___ f.	Other evidence:_____	___